

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

106th Congress
1st Session

Vote No. 243

July 30, 1999, 12:41 p.m.
Page S-9899 Temp. Record

TAXPAYER REFUND ACT/Higher Taxes, Veterans Spending

SUBJECT: Taxpayer Refund Act of 1999 . . . S. 1429. Wellstone motion to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the Wellstone motion to recommit with instructions.

ACTION: MOTION REJECTED, 58-42

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1429, the Taxpayer Refund Act of 1999, will give back to the American people \$792 billion of the \$3.3 trillion in surplus taxes that the Congressional Budget Office (CBO) has projected that the Federal Government will collect over the next 10 years. The projection is based on assumptions of 2.4-percent average annual growth in the economy, no growth in discretionary spending after 2002, and entitlement spending growth as required under current law. Approximately \$1.9 trillion of the surpluses will be Social Security surpluses (Republicans have been attempting to defeat a Democratic filibuster of a proposal to protect those surpluses from being spent; see vote Nos. 90, 96, 166, 170, 193, and 211). After protecting the Social Security surpluses and providing tax relief of \$792 billion, \$505 billion will remain for additional spending or debt reduction. The average growth rate over the past 50 years has been 3.4 percent. The current growth rate is around 4 percent. If the 3.4-percent average rate is maintained for the next 10 years, then (using the CBO rule-of-thumb chart from Appendix C of the January 1999 Economic and Budget Outlook) the surplus will be roughly \$4.9 trillion, not \$3.3 trillion. Key tax relief provisions include that the bottom tax rate will be lowered to 14 percent and expanded (providing \$297.5 billion in tax relief over 10 years) and the tax burden on families will be cut (providing \$221.7 billion in tax relief). Tax relief will also be given to encourage saving for retirement, to make education and health care more affordable, to lower death taxes, and to lower taxes on small businesses.

The Wellstone motion to recommit with instructions would instruct the Finance Committee to report the bill back within 3 days with provisions that would establish a reserve account for increasing spending by \$3 billion per year on medical care for veterans for each of the next 5 years, and that would pay for that increased spending by "reductions in the amounts of new tax reductions provided in the bill, wherever possible, for individuals with incomes exceeding \$200,000 per year."

All votes after vote No. 233 were on amendments or motions that were made after all debate time had expired. However, 2

(See other side)

YEAS (58)			NAYS (42)			NOT VOTING (0)	
Republicans (14 or 25%)	Democrats (44 or 98%)		Republicans (41 or 75%)	Democrats (1 or 2%)		Republicans (0)	Democrats (0)
Abraham	Akaka	Kennedy	Allard	Hagel	Breaux		
Burns	Baucus	Kerrey	Ashcroft	Hatch			
Collins	Bayh	Kerry	Bennett	Helms			
DeWine	Biden	Kohl	Bond	Inhofe			
Hutchinson	Bingaman	Landrieu	Brownback	Kyl			
Hutchison	Boxer	Lautenberg	Bunning	Lott			
Jeffords	Bryan	Leahy	Campbell	Lugar			
McCain	Byrd	Levin	Chafee	Mack			
Santorum	Cleland	Lieberman	Cochran	McConnell			
Smith, Bob (I)	Conrad	Lincoln	Coverdell	Murkowski			
Snowe	Daschle	Mikulski	Craig	Nickles			
Specter	Dodd	Moynihan	Crapo	Roberts			
Thomas	Dorgan	Murray	Domenici	Roth			
Warner	Durbin	Reed	Enzi	Sessions			
	Edwards	Reid	Fitzgerald	Shelby			
	Feingold	Robb	Frist	Smith, Gordon			
	Feinstein	Rockefeller	Gorton	Stevens			
	Graham	Sarbanes	Gramm	Thompson			
	Harkin	Schumer	Grams	Thurmond			
	Hollings	Torricelli	Grassley	Voinovich			
	Inouye	Wellstone	Gregg				
	Johnson	Wyden					

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

minutes of debate were allowed before each vote by unanimous consent, some statements were inserted in the record, and some amendments and motions were debated prior to being offered or made. Senator Bond raised a point of order that the motion violated section 305 of the Budget Act. Senator Wellstone then moved to waive the Budget Act for the consideration of the motion. Generally, those favoring the motion to waive favored the motion to recommit; those opposing the motion to waive opposed the motion to recommit.

Those favoring the motion to waive contended:

The Veterans' Affairs Committee has said that we need to add \$3 billion per year for veterans health care. Every Senator voted for an increase in veterans health care spending on the budget resolution. This bill before us, though, will require huge cuts in domestic discretionary spending, including spending on medical care for veterans. If this bill is enacted, veterans hospitals around the country will have to shut down. The Wellstone motion would fix that problem by taking away some of the tax breaks this bill will give the rich and using the money to take care of veterans. We urge our colleagues to support the Wellstone motion.

Those opposing the motion to waive contended:

We agree that there should be increased funding for veterans. We disagree that we need to increase total spending to pay for it. The budget resolution that we passed provided both for increased spending on health care for veterans and for the \$792 billion tax refund of surplus taxes that is provided for in this bill. The Wellstone motion is not about providing more money for veterans health care; that issue is decided. Instead, it is about whether we need the Federal Government to take more money from the taxpayers and get bigger or whether we need the Federal Government to set priorities and pay for veterans' health care within its budget, without making the Government bigger.

While we are on the subject of priorities, we note that the responsible budget that we have already passed is a lot more generous to this Nation's veterans than the Clinton/Gore Administration's big-spending, tax-increasing budget. The Administration proposed hundreds of billions of dollars in new spending, no tax relief, and an extra \$100 billion in new taxes, yet it still could not spare anything for veterans. The Clinton/Gore Administration wanted to flat-line the Veterans' Administration's budget, which would have resulted in some 13,000 Veterans' Affairs employees being fired and medical facilities around the country shutting down.

The Wellstone motion plays the old political game that liberals love to play any time there is a proposal to stop the Government from increasing spending. That game is to say that if any spending restraint is exercised, the first place that will be cut is in a high-priority area, such as veterans' health care. That scare tactic has occasionally worked, because Members know if they have the courage to oppose it they will be unfairly portrayed as favoring cutting funding for high-priority areas. The reality, of course, is that when restraint is exercised low-priority spending is the first to go. We urge Senators not to succumb to the scare tactic being employed by this amendment. The budget resolution, unlike the President's budget, has already planned for increased veterans' health care spending, just as it has planned for the \$792 billion in tax relief in this bill. The Wellstone motion would not increase spending on veterans' health care; it would just deny \$15 billion of the tax refund. We urge the rejection of this motion.